

Comments from the Inspector on disposable gloves

Food Safety Team, USAF School of Aerospace Medicine

Is wearing disposable gloves while preparing food required? The answer is, that it depends on the type of food being prepared. The Food Code states that foodhandlers may not touch “ready-to-eat-foods,” except when washing fruits and vegetables; however, the Food Code does not require wearing gloves while preparing foods as long as spatulas, tongs, deli-tissue, or other utensils are used to avoid contact with ready-to-eat foods. On the contrary, when preparing foods that are going to be cooked, contact with food is not prohibited, but it should be minimized.

The best way foodhandlers can prevent food contamination is frequent handwashing. Wearing gloves is also a good way to protect the food from contamination, but if foodhandlers are not careful, gloves can be vehicles for cross contamination of food. If one chooses to wear gloves while preparing foods, keep in mind that gloves will become contaminated just as hands do, and will need to be changed any time that hands would normally be washed. Make sure to change gloves when working with different types of raw foods and when going from a raw food to a ready-to-eat food. Finally, remember that hands must be washed before donning a new pair of gloves. Disposable gloves are not a replacement for handwashing.

For more information, contact your base Public Health office at 6-1225. Or contact the Food Safety Team at the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine (Brooks AFB, TX), at (210) 536-2058 -DSN 240-2058- or E-mail a message to diaz@usafsam.brooks.af.mil